"Truth Is One, Men Call It By Various Names." —RIG VEDA

VEDANTA QUARTERLY

Message of the East

VOLUME XXXIX

Issued by

THE VEDANTA CENTRE

420 BEACON STREET, BOSTON 15, MASSACHUSETTS

SINGLE COPIES 75c $3.00 A YEAR

Entered as second class matter March 26, 1930 at the Post Office at Boston, Massachusetts, under the act of March 3, 1878

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."

VOL. XXXIX 1950 NUMBER 4

WAITING

By *John Burroughs*

Serene I fold my arms and wait,
Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea:
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
For lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day,
The friends I seek are seeking me;
No wind can drive my bark astray,
Nor change the tide of destiny.

What matter if I stand alone?
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it has sown,
And garner up its fruit of tears.

. . . .

The stars come nightly to the sky;
The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high
Can keep my own away from me.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

The Avatara is always one and the same. Plunging into the ocean of life, He rises up in one place and is known as Krishna, diving again and rising elsewhere, He is known as Christ. —*Sri Ramakrishna.*

The true aim in life should be illumination, the true morality the practice of justice, the true redemption should be the liberation of the soul from error and its union with God through consciousness. —*Giordano Bruno.*

For the goal, the inconceivable intensity of Actuality which is called the Timeless, the unserialized, undistracted, undissipated state of Aeternitas is not at the end of Time when Time is spent, but, on the contrary, is the transmutation of Time. At any moment utter concentration on the temporal instant transforms it into, discovers it to be, the Eternal.
—*Gerald Heard.*

The man is great, and he alone,
Who serves a greatness not his own,
For neither praise nor pelf:
Content to know and be unknown:
Whole in himself. —*Lord Bulwer Lytton.*

Every thing is made of one hidden stuff. The world globes itself in a drop of dew. We put our life into every act. The true doctrine of omnipresence is that God reappears with all His parts in every moss and cobweb. Thus is the universe alive. —*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

Nothing is hopeless that is right. —*Susan B. Anthony.*

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods down it. —*Old Testament.*

DIVINE INCARNATION

By *Swami Paramananda*

Divine Incarnation usually is interpreted by people of various religions and denominations according to their particular beliefs. Thus Christians throughout the world hold to the concept of Christ as the *One* Divine Messenger, the *One* Incarnation and Saviour, the "only begotten Son of God." However I have no desire to deal with the dogmatic aspect of this great subject, but shall try to consider it from the standpoint of its value to our human existence.

Swami Vivekananda, speaking of the Saviours, Avatars, and Incarnations, says: "They can transmit spirituality with a touch, even with a mere wish. The lowest and the most degraded characters become, in one second, saints, at their command. They are the Teachers of all teachers, the highest manifestations of God through man." . . .

"When a huge tidal wave comes," says Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, "all the little brooks and ditches become full to the brim without any effort or consciousness on their own part. So when an Incarnation comes, a tidal wave of spirituality breaks upon the world, and people feel the fullness of spirituality in the air."

The great Swami himself was a very rational person, and when he came under Sri Ramakrishna's influence he never allowed his love for the divine personality of his Master to turn him away from the worship of great Truth, which formed the basis of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching and constituted its value for mankind. Therefore his words, which I have just quoted to you, have a special significance.

Whatever may be the claim of any religion, without a single exception each has seen the Incarnate Spirit as the embodiment of Divine Love. There is no religion that describes It in any other terms.

It is only as humanity forgets its own spiritual nature that it begins to give a wrong interpretation to these facts, which are recorded in the annals of mankind. In the name of Christ, have we not done this? Are there not today people who would not hesitate to cause bloodshed in that Name? It is not the fault of the religion, and certainly not the fault of the Teacher, that this is so. The fault lies in our human understanding and in our misapplication of the teaching which we have received. In our actions, we associate it with aggressiveness, and arm ourselves primarily with that element; therefore we need someone like ourselves, wearing a human form, to come and mingle with us and show us again the way.

Meister Eckhart tells us, "God became man that I might become God." Intellectually we may not want to accept anyone in the form of man, to represent Divinity—that great Absolute Being. Yet it is the only way whereby our contact with that One may be definite, and so it has been considered in India throughout the ages.

In the Bhagavad Gita we read that whenever and wherever there is a decline of love and spiritual awareness, there the Lord embodies Himself for the reestablishment of order and harmony. Ignorance and wrong conceptions, like clouds in the sky, have to be dispelled. When materialism becomes rampant—thus the holy books tell us—this Divine visitation occurs.

There are people who cannot believe that any other force than the material can work in the world. Their rationalism may tell them that hatred can never succeed, yet they persuade themselves that by ingenuity they can indulge in it, and not suffer the consequences. In other words they renounce their spiritual faith because they believe that there is something else more powerful. For this reason materialism has been in the ascendant. It is needful to have spirituality, and

it is needful to have those who embody spirituality, like Christ, Buddha, Sri Krishna, and the latest divine manifestation, Sri Ramakrishna. But I am going to make it more general.

Sri Krishna (the Lord), speaking in the Voice of the Supreme, said: "Wherever you see great power, glory, strength, beauty manifesting, know that there is a portion of my splendour!"

We are all incarnations of the Spirit, but in some cases the Divine aspect is far more apparent than in others, and occasionally there are those who tower above their fellowmen and whose personalities are the exemplification of all sublime qualities. Man has become lost. He wants to find his way, but he cannot do so without a light. These great souls are like lamp posts set high to guide men through the night. We find that they stand with fixity of purpose; they do not waver. Great generals, men of force—world conquerors—they lie in the dust, their names often forgotten, their memory like a dark shadow on men's hearts; but these sublime personages continue to shed their light through the centuries.

Spiritual Light is humanity's ideal. Until you can bring that into manifestation, you will have only uncertain success, no matter what you may seem to achieve out in the world.

The great Divine Incarnations make no compromise. As we study their lives we find that they did not come to earth with pomp and glory, or with equipment like an army or navy, nor even with a heavenly legion to fortify them. Whatever they possessed, they renounced. From our point of view, they rendered themselves helpless. We must not forget this fact, because it forms such a very great contrast to our modern way of thinking and living. We do not believe that there is any power which does not have a material background and foundation.

Let us remember that Christ, in his crucial moment, went away from whatever assistance was offered Him. He wanted to find His connection with His Source. That is why His life and teachings continue to benefit humanity. Divine Incarnations always seek to teach, through living example, that in the hour of need, when men feel helpless, there is a power above and beyond them, from which even death cannot rob them.

"Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Suppose we call the Father our Source, the real Substance of our spirit, with whom we must unite in order to know our true way. Christ, the Incarnate Spirit, could say, "I and My Father are One." This consciousness protected Him from all worldly glamour. When Satan tempted Him, offering Him all the kingdoms of the earth, He stood firm on the glory of God — turned His gaze toward the Divine kingdom. In this He was not an exception. All Incarnations take the same attitude, but it will be a mistake if we think of them as predestined souls. They do not come into prearranged conditions. They walk with men, like other men. They build up their spiritual stature by living in the material world; only so could they become a genuine help to their fellows.

"If you see a man unterrified in the midst of dangers, untouched by desires, happy in adversity, peaceful amid the storm, will you not say: A divine power has descended upon that man?" This is from Seneca.

What is that power? It is what we might call a definite indication of Divine manifestation. Our greatest misfortune is that we are blinded by egotism. In India, one of the first lessons we are taught, in the way of discipleship, is to renounce this self-assertiveness. People often dispute this teaching. "How," they ask, "can we give up asserting the self?" Actually this self-assertion is our greatest impediment.

I once knew a Swami in India who, when anyone of high social position came to him for training, would give him the lowest — what would be called menial — service. "You see," he said, "that tests his true nature and the extent of his egotism. Often these people come to me, not to learn but to teach."

That is often the case with us, but unless we are humble we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. These truths cannot be acquired through books. God's power can manifest through us only as we gain the power to receive.

Sri Ramakrishna, in one of his parables, says that low ground retains the water and becomes fertile; there all things grow very readily; but the hilltops shed the water and nothing grows on their heights. Same way it is with the human heart. We should consider these things instead of concentrating on theories, doctrines, and dogmas.

Someone once asked me, "Why is it that the Western world is not manifesting some of the truths that it knows intellectually?" These things have nothing to do with East or West. Wherever there is practical reality, there spiritual fruition will take place, but it can take place only when we want it with our whole heart.

Think of the wars that have been waged in the name of religion. The great Incarnate Spirits have not asked man to go out and raise an army, but to do lowly work in the name of the Lord. Buddha, the great Incarnate Spirit of compassion, who lived five hundred years before Christ, sent out his followers—his missionaries—with this one injunction: to go and render service, love all people, and spread the great doctrine that love will conquer—must always conquer—hatred, and is the only force that can conquer it and really bring blessing to all mankind. That was his command. He did not say, "Go and make converts," but "Go forth for the good

of many, for the happiness of many, out of compassion for the world."

It is an interesting fact in human history that the highest ideals have always been spread by highest means. When we forget that, there is chaos and confusion. Today we believe in power. But whose power should dominate the world? We may say, "Power descends from God!" I admit that, but when it falls under human influence it becomes colored by good or evil. Passing through one instrumentality, it can be tremendously cruel and pernicious; through another, it brings blessings. In the one case it destroys; in the other it protects. This marks the differentiation between the proud instinct which characterizes the egotistic man and the divine instinct, which moves the God-given soul. The latter renounces all things to which the former clings because he desires them for his own self-gratification.

The pure Incarnate Spirits teach us primarily how to transcend the selfish, material viewpoint that creates such havoc in the world. They try to raise the standard of mankind. Man has created all the evil things in the world; also all the beautiful things that have been created are due to his inspiration, to his love, and his belief in the Highest.

We do believe in the Highest, and in order that we may believe more firmly, and may realize our belief, there is born in our midst One who comes as a brother, a friend, even as the servant of man; One who stands out in contrast to the world, which is forever feverishly seeking power. The One, who comes is not afraid of the world, because power—Divine power—is there in his heart. Therefore he does not become anxious, because he knows that that power in him is deathless and invincible.

Right here we find his great value to humanity. Men forget their divine birthright and need to be reminded by one

who remembers that God *is* and that the truth never changes. Through example we learn to be steadfast in that vision.

"Love your enemies," said Christ, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

"Hatred is never conquered by hatred. It is conquered by love," declared Buddha.

Christ, Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, and Lao-tze—I can speak of them all with the same enthusiasm. Why? Because I can make no distinction between them. Some may think that is peculiar, but the moment we make distinctions, our Incarnations and Saviours lose their stature. We cover them with the crust of dogma. Let me make this quite clear. If our concept of God, Divinity, the Supreme Spirit, is wholly embodied for us in a man of denomination, with name and form and nationality, it will never fill our need for the Divine.

My idea of Divinity is something unencompassed—absolute—God manifests Himself from time to time and it does not matter whether it be in India, China, Egypt, or in our own midst. Never think that any nation or religion bears the exclusive stamp of the Divine. There is only one requirement, and that is that we welcome the Incarnate Spirit with purity of heart, yearning, and an unbiased mind.

Today we are in such great need of divine inspiration. We are filled with fear, and overwhelmed by waves of darkness. Even men of faith think, "What is going to happen?" It is not the first time humanity has asked that question. Christianity likes to claim that before Christ came the whole world was without light. But in this they are a little confused. The all-loving Spirit never neglects His children at any time, and let no one think that the world existed two thousand years without Him. Would it not be well, in our great need, to take to prayer? Never mind what our individual conception

of Divine Incarnation may be, let us be sure of one thing—that whenever with whole-hearted spirit we pray to the Supreme Intelligence, whether for ourselves, for others, or for the world, He will come.

How He will come we may not know. Perhaps a beggar will come to your door, as in many a legend. You will say: "I have nothing to give this man!" and later you will find it was the Soul of Christ who came to you, but because you had no love you had no time to give him; or if you had love, it was turned in another direction, down a wrong channel, thus you robbed yourself of the blessing of your own Ideal. The very one that you worship came to your door and knocked, and you gave Him no access. You had the idea that your special Deity, your Christ, or your Buddha, must come according to your conception, your pre-conceived notion—Christ as you have pictured Him, or Buddha in his familiar garb. But think of the paintings of Christ, each with a different face and a different garment! Yet if He came and was different from your mental image of Him, you would say: "I have not been accustomed to seeing Him like this. It is not Christ!"

We are used to thinking of Him in flowing robes and with long hair, and we insist that he cannot be Christ without these selfsame, external attributes. That is not the way we shall ever understand the invincible Spirit. We shall not understand It until we have a spiritual concept that is all-inclusive and are able to see everything with fineness of vision.

"Hated or beloved there is none to me," the Lord proclaims in the Bhagavad-Gita, "but he who worships Me with whole-hearted devotion, I am in him and he is in Me!"

We speak of the Incarnations of God, but actually there is only one Divine Incarnation, and that is the Incarnation of absolute Love, absolute Truth, absolute Wisdom. Wherever

this manifestation takes place all men can find refuge. We do not need to label It with any name or wage war one against another because of It. In fact we do not follow any Saviour when we follow with the idea that we have to fight against our brothers for Him. That would be incongruous.

Never should we forsake the One Spirit! May that Spirit be born in us in such a manner that It becomes a tangible force, inspiring us through those ideals for whose sake the Divine Incarnations have all lived and died, sacrificing this little life for the sake of the ultimate Vision—gentleness overcoming harshness; light conquering darkness; hatred, anger, selfishness, treachery giving way before the one beautiful force of Love! This is the spirit that dominates the message of Incarnate Divinity, and that spirit must at last prevail; because when light manifests, the darkness cannot fight against it. I believe in this. Let us all believe in it. For only when we believe these things can we profit from them. Whatever is contrary to them is false doctrine, no matter what may be its origin.

Let us remember that "the Light of the Soul knoweth no boundary lines; . . . it shineth everywhere!" That is Spirit Incarnate! I am blessed that I can draw inspiration from the Light, no matter wherefrom it shines.

At the California Ashrama, in our Temple there, every stained-glass window shows a different place of worship: in one, a Hindu temple; in another, a Christian cathedral—or a Jewish synagogue—or a Shinto shrine—and it gives me inspiration to know that the light shines equally through them all. It is God's light, and the light which illumines each window comes from the same source.

Let us gather strength from these thoughts and translate them into a living faith, so that when chaos threatens us we may not be cast down. Rather let us pray with our whole

heart, not just that light may come, but that when it does come, we may be ready to receive it and transmit it, and never be so blinded with aggressiveness that we do not see that it is there.

The Spirit of Christ the Lord and of Buddha the All-loving may in truth stand before our door and knock. When that occurs, may we not be too weary, too full of slumber, to give It welcome. May darkness not blind us to Its Presence nor the veil of ignorance be so thick before our eyes and over our heart that we fail to see or hear It!

We may not all be great, but we can all quietly in our heart of hearts pray for these things, so full of blessing not only for us but for all men. If our longing is sincere and deep the Supreme Power will aid us and will manifest to us. Then our pain and sorrow will be swallowed up in a great joy which will be complete only when the whole world is full of joy, full of peace, safety and divine security.

MAN OF GOD

By Swami Paramananda

O man of God, move forward on thy path.
Let not thy heart be distressed, nor lose thy courage.
Walk alone, walk on, and weep if thy heart is heavy;
But let not thy spirit sink in grief, nor give up thy march.
O man of God, thou art a stranger here amidst this world's crowd,
Yet thy lonely tread sheds light upon this dark and desolate world.
O thou brave, bleeding heart,
Giver of sweet peace to world-weary souls.

MEMORIES OF INDIA AND INDIANS

By *Sister Devamata*

The memories recorded here are only an aftermath of the reminiscences given in my two published volumes, "*Days in an Indian Monastery*" and "*Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples.*" These contain lesser incidents, more personal details, but the small fact has its place in history quite as much as the happenings of wider measure; so, in response to a reiterated request, I am setting down now the unspoken memories that still linger in my mind as incense in a shrine after the worship is ended. My hope in doing this is that it will help to shorten the perspective, for those who come after, of the mighty Ones whom it was my holy privilege to know.

My first contact with the Ramakrishna movement was through Swami Vivekananda. It occurred before the Mission had taken definite form; when all there was to tell of the far-spread work to be done later was a band of wandering Sannyasins, waiting for the call yet half unaware that they were waiting. One of the band said to me years after, "If we had dreamed of the labors that lay before us, we would not have spent our strength in severe austerities or taxed our bodies by privations and long wanderings. All that was asked of us, we thought, was a simple life of renunciation, obeying in humble spirit what our Master had taught us."

The first hint of anything beyond this, I learned from the same source, was a quiet voice heard only by Swami Vivekananda as he lay at the point of death in an Himalayan glade under a rude thatch of dry branches. It said: "You will not die. You have a great work to do in the world." He told it to two fellow disciples with him, and one of them told it to me. But the voice came without a form to give it substance. How could they know that the words spoken were prophecy?

Time proved them to be such. Their fulfilment had just begun, when all unexpectedly I touched the Swami's orbit, now circling a world. My mother, sister and I had spent the month of June at the great Fair of 1893 in Chicago, and we were planning to return for the Congress of Religions in the autumn on our way to Japan and the Orient. A death in the family brought our journey to a halt in a little town in Ohio. Soon after our arrival there the Swedenborgian minister, as a courtesy to strangers, invited us to dine with him. We went. The minister himself met us at the door, his face aglow with enthusiasm. He had just returned from the Congress of Religions and he could talk of nothing else.

He described at length the various sessions of the Congress, dwelling with emphasis on this delegate or that. "But," he continued, "there was one speaker who stood out above all others, because of his learning, his eloquenece and his impressive personality. No other could compare with him except two or three Roman Catholic prelates, and they had sent their best men." He paused, leaving his brilliant figure without name or nationality. "Who was he?" I asked eagerly. The minister replied quietly: "A Hindu—Swami Vivekananda."

I was prepared to be keenly interested, for the spiritual teachings of India were not unfamiliar to me. Edwin Arnold's "*Light of Asia*" had acquainted me with the exalted beauty of Lord Buddha's life and doctrine; I had read and reread Mohini Chatterji's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* looking up all his references to parallel passages in the Bible; and long hours had been devoted through the previous winter to the study of Max Muller's English version of the *Upanishads.* I still have the copy, worn and marked, that I used at that time. Thus a gradual orientation had taken place in my mind.

Autumn brought our return to New York. Winter set in

with its busy routine, but the memory of the conversation with the Swedenborgian minister still remained vivid. One day, as I was walking up Madison Avenue, I saw in the window of the Hall of the Universal Brotherhood a modest sign saying: "Next Sunday at 3 P.M. Swami Vivekananda will speak here on 'What is Vedanta?' and the following Sunday on 'What is Yoga?' " I reached the hall twenty minutes before the hour. It was already over half full. It was not large, however—a long, narrow room with a single aisle and benches reaching from it to the wall; a low platform holding reading-desk and chair at the far end; and a flight of stairs at the back. The hall was on the second story, and these stairs gave the only way of access to it—audience and speaker both had to make use of them. By the time three o'clock had arrived, hall, stairs, window-sills and railings all were crowded to their utmost capacity. Many even were standing below, hoping to catch a faint echo of the words spoken in the hall above.

A sudden hush, a quiet step on the stairs, and Swami Vivekananda passed in stately erectness up the aisle to the platform. He began to speak, and memory, time, place, people, all melted away. Nothing was left but a voice ringing through the void. It was as if a gate had swung open and I had passed out on a road leading to limitless attainment. The end of it was not visible; but the promise of what it would be shone through the thought and flashed through the personality of the one who gave it. He stood there—prophet of infinitude.

The silence of an empty hall recalled me to myself. Everyone was gone except the Swami and two others standing near the platform. I learned later that they were Mr. and Mrs. Goodyear, ardent disciples of the Swami. Mr. Goodyear made the announcements at the meetings. After that I attended all the classes and lectures during the Swami's two seasons in

New York but I never came in close personal touch with him. There seemed to be an intangible barrier. Was it created by shyness or a sense of strangeness, or by my elder sister's prejudice? She had no sympathy with my Oriental studies and often said she wished I "could get salvation nearer home."

The meetings began in an upper room; then because of their increasing size they were transferred to the floor below. Later they moved to another house—one in a long monotonous row of dingy boarding-houses. It was a heterogeneous gathering at the classes in those shabby lodgings: old and young, rich and poor, wise and foolish; stingy ones who dropped a button in the collection basket, and more generous ones who gave a dollar bill or even two. We all met day after day and became friends without words or association. Some of us never missed a meeting. We followed the course on *Bhakti-Yoga* and the course on *Jnana-Yoga*. We walked simultaneously along the paths of *Raja-Yoga* and *Karma-Yoga*. We were almost sorry that there were only four *Yogas*. We would have liked to have six or eight, that the number of classes might be multiplied.

We were insatiable knowledge-seekers. We did not limit ourselves to any one doctrine or scripture. We went to one lecture in the morning, a second one in the afternoon, and sometimes to a third in the evening. Philosophy, metaphysics, astrology, each had its turn. Yet although we seemed to scatter our interest, our real loyalty belonged to the Swami. We recognized in him a power that no other teacher possessed. It was he alone who was shaping our thought and conviction. Even my dog—an Irish setter—felt this. He would stand perfectly still and a quiver would run through his body whenever Swamiji would lay his hand on his head and tell him he was a true *Yogi*.

The faithful group that followed the Swami wherever he

spoke were as relentless as they were earnest. If he suggested tentatively omitting a class because of a holiday or for some other reason, there was a loud protest always. This one had come to New York specially for the teaching and wished to get all she could; another was leaving town soon and was unwilling to lose a single opportunity of hearing the Swami. They gave him no respite. He taught early and late. Among the most eager were a number of teachers, each with a blank-book in hand; and the Swami's words were punctuated by the tap of their pencils taking rapid notes. Not a sentence went unrecorded, and I am sure that if later any one had made the circuit of the New York centres of New Thought, Metaphysics, or Divine Science, she would have heard everywhere Vedanta and Yoga in more or less diluted form.

Through the late winter and spring of 1895 the work — carried on without the intermittance of the earlier teaching —gained tremendous momentum and fervor. We divided our interest no longer. It was wholly focused on the message the Swami had to give. That had become the foundation of our daily living, the stimulus that urged us onward. For several consecutive months class followed class, lecture followed lecture. Now there remained only a final class and a final lecture. Then the last class was over and in a hush of sadness we filed out from the shabby lodging-house, dropping our farewell offering in the basket at the door.

There was still a final Sunday lecture. It took place in the Madison Square Concert Hall—a fairly large hall on the second floor behind the Madison Square Garden, a vast arena used for bicycle races, horse-shows, for anything that required space. The building seemed huge at that time, but later New York outgrew it and it was torn down. The Concert Hall was much used by glee clubs, string quartets, and lecturers. I do not know how many it held but it was full to the utter-

most at that closing lecture; every seat, every foot of standing-room was occupied.

I believe that was the day on which Swami Vivekananda delivered the lecture on "*My Master.*" As he entered the hall from a door at the side of the platform, one sensed a different mood in him. He seemed less confident, as if he approached his task reluctantly. Years after in Madras I understood. He hesitated at all times to speak of his Guru. During his early wanderings through South India he refused to reveal his name even, believing he represented him so poorly. Only in Madras, when he came unaware upon his Master's picture, did the words burst from his lips: "That is my Guru, Sri Ramakrishna," and tears streamed down his face. So now was he reluctant. He began his lecture with a long preamble, by once in his subject, it swept him. The force of it drove him from one end of the platform to the other. It overflowed in a swift-running stream of eloquence and feeling. The large audience listened in awed stillness and at the close many left the hall without speaking. As for myself, I was transfixed. The transcendent picture drawn overwhelmed me. The call had come and I answered.

It was on this Sunday that the Swami's first volume appeared. For some time the lectures of one Sunday had been for sale on the book table the next Sunday in pamphlet form. Now a whole collection of lectures on *Karma Yoga* was brought out in a large, thin, closely-printed volume—very different from the edition published later. It was not very beautiful but the workers were extremely proud of it.

A supplementary meeting in a private house marked the close of the Swami's New York work. In June he went with a group of students to Thousand Island Park and in August he sailed for Europe. The time of hearing was over, the time of pondering and practising had come.

As we dwelt in memory on his teachings and tried from day to day to put them into our life, we came to feel more and more that a mighty comet had swung into our hemisphere, shone for a season in our heavens and swung out again, leaving a line of light behind it. Its radiance still lingers.

A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

By *Swami Vivekananda*

(Condensed from "The Ideal of a Universal Religion")

(*Concluded*)

What I want to propagate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action. If professors from colleges come, scientific men and physicists, they will court reason. Let them have it as much as they want . . . Religion must be able to show how to realize the philosophy that teaches us that this world is one, that there is but One Existence in the universe.

Similarly, if the mystic comes, we must welcome him, be ready to give him the science of mental analysis, and practically demonstrate it before him. And if emotional people come, we must sit, laugh and weep with them in the name of the Lord; we must "drink the cup of love and become mad." If the energetic worker comes, we must work with him, with all the energy that we have.

And this combination will be the ideal of the nearest approach to a universal religion. Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds *all* these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is my ideal of a perfect man. Everyone who has only one or two of these elements of character, I consider "one-sided;" and this world is almost full of such

"one-sided" men, with knowledge of that one road only, in which they move, and anything else is dangerous and horrible to them.

To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is *my* ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call *Yoga*—union. To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of love; and to the philosopher, it is the union of *all* existence. This is what is meant by *Yoga*. This is a Sanskrit term, and these four divisions of *Yoga* have, in Sanskrit, different names. The man who seeks after this kind of union is called a *Yogin*. The worker is called the *Karma-Yogin*. He who seeks the union through love is called the *Bhakti-Yogin*. He who seeks it through mysticism is called the *Raja-Yogin*. And he who seeks it through philosophy is called the *Jnana-Yogin*. So this word *Yogin* comprises them all. . .

Lastly, it is imperative that all these various *Yogas* should be carried out in practice; mere theories about them will not do any good. First we have to hear about them, then we have to think about them. We have to reason the thoughts out, impress them on our minds, and we have to meditate on them, realize them, until at last they become our whole life. No longer will religion remain a bundle of ideas or theories, nor an intellectual assent; it will enter into our very self.

By means of intellectual assent we may today subscribe to many foolish things, and change our minds altogether tomorrow. But true religion never changes. Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging, but it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion.

BOETHIUS: THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY

By *Charlotte Miles*

Boethius, philosopher, man-of-letters and statesman, has remained one of the noblest figures in Western history. Born in Rome 480 A.D., only four years after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, he came from a long line of patricians, who had distinguished themselves in the service of the State for generations. They belonged to the backbone of the Roman aristocracy, upholding the old moral standards and nourishing the waning classical culture in times of general decadence. Though by nature a philosopher and poet, Boethius considered it his duty to enter into public life, not only for the sake of his family tradition, but primarily in accordance with Plato's word: that States would be happy either if philosophers ruled them, or if it so chanced that rulers turned philosophers.

In 510 the honor of consulship was bestowed upon him, and in 522 he was appointed to a high office at the court of Theoderic in Ravenna. The king of the Ostrogoths, who was at the same time governor of Rome, though himself illiterate, possessed the faculty of attracting to his service some of the finest minds of the old metropolis. He had ruled wisely and vigorously as long as he could be reasonably sure of the loyalty of the Roman senate. But seeing his power threatened by the possibility that Rome might enter into a conspiracy with the government of the Eastern Empire, the aging king lost his sound judgment. When Boethius fearlessly stood up for a senator, who was under suspicion of having negotiated with the Emperor in Constantinople, he threw him into prison and condemned him to death without

trial. Without doubt, Boethius acted in good faith. But, not being a politician, he may have overlooked some delicate complications concerning the balance of power between East and West, which was of vital importance to Theoderic. The king was relentless, and Boethius was executed in 525 A.D. Later, under the regency of Theoderic's daughter Amalaswintha, his innocence was recognized and his confiscated possessions were restored to his family. Boethius' death marked the decline of Theoderic's power. He survived his honest adviser by only a few years, and legend has it that his death was precipitated by remorse over his injustice.

Living at one of the great divides of history, when the ideals of a new world order were slowly crystallizing in the midst of violent upheavals, Boethius occupies the unique position of epitomizing the classical culture of Greece and Rome, and at the same time contributing fundamentally to Christian thought.

Although not all of his literary plans could be carried out on account of his untimely death, Boethius' work is of considerable volume. He wrote treatises on geometry, arithmetic and music, as well as on the philosophical sciences proper: logic, metaphysics and ethics. In one of his mathematical manuscripts the use of characters evidently derived from Hindu numerals has puzzled later scholars, but no explanation has been found. Unfortunately his great project to present in Latin the whole of the Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy remained unfinished, but nevertheless he left a rich legacy of translations of, and commentaries on, Aristotle, Porphyry, and other Greek writers. His chief Christian writings consist of five theological tractates, notably the one on the Trinity, all of which occupied the minds of the scholastics during the Middle Ages.

Distinguished as these literary achievements are, they are

outweighed in importance by his last book: "*The Consolation of Philosophy.*"

Written under the shadow of death in the prison of Piva, it is not only a remarkable philosophical essay, but also a human document of a high order, revealing the author's integrity of character, the depth of his thought and the nobility of his feeling and expression. It has been loved by wise men through more than fourteen centuries, and in times of defeat and distress, it has brought solace to those who sought its message. In the Middle Ages it was perhaps the most widely translated book. Already around 900 A.D. King Alfred the Great rendered it into Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse in order to make its moral philosophy accessible to his people. Some of the most celebrated men-of-letters of Europe translated it afterwards, among them Chaucer and Brunetto Latini, the preceptor of Dante, who himself praised it highly. A recent German translation found its way into the Concentration Camps and left its mark on some of the best writing after the surrender. "Conquered Earth will give you the stars," has once more become a well-known quotation.

Although the Catholic Church has celebrated Boethius as one of its martyrs, stressing his Catholicism against Theoderic's Aryanism, and has pronounced him a Saint, the cause of his death had nothing to do with his Christian faith, nor is his last and most personal book based upon it. During his lifetime the Church was heavily involved in politics and the simple teachings of Christ were obscured by dogmatic disputes. Is it not natural that Boethius, at this late hour, should avoid the controversial ground of theology and turn to the masters who had nurtured his mind in his youth? To them he had devoted most of his private work with the high-minded wish to make their teachings known to the Latin speaking world. And so the "*Consolation*" is written in the

Greek tradition, and the influence of Plato, Aristotle and, with reservations, also that of the Stoics and the Neoplatonic school is unmistakable. But Boethius is not a mere follower. The desperate situation in which he found himself has given the book an urgency, a profound concern with the nature of life in time and in eternity, which results in a unique and original contribution to the philosophy of the western world, and while there is no direct reference made to Christianity, it is in no way out of harmony with it. The classic definition of eternity to be found in one of the last chapters, was adopted by Thomas Aquinas and regarded as authoritative by the mediaeval schools.

The book consists of a dialogue between the writer and his great friend, Philosophy, who has entered his cell to console him. Out of his dejection and despair she leads him to an understanding of his fate, to the realization of the freedom of his soul, and to the experience of God's peace. Her speech is interspersed with hymns and poems of great beauty.

The first two books are largely autobiographical, giving an account of the events which led to Boethius' arrest. He laments his misfortune, but his grief does not long remain on a personal level. He asks: "If this is the reward for my endeavor to stand up for the innocent, to protect the poor, and to defend the weak, in short to serve the State as a philosopher, and if, on the other hand, the godless and criminal succeed in their schemes and gain honor and wealth,—how then has mankind a part in the divine order which is manifest in all nature? How can this order, this moral government, be maintained, if evil be triumphant?"

Step by step Philosophy reveals the answer. The argument proceeds through five books. When a conclusion is reached, a previous question is taken up again to a certain extent, for more exacting probing, so that there is seemingly much repeti-

tion. But always a wider circle is drawn, until the farthest boundaries of human thought are touched.

To clear the ground for an understanding of life in truth, Philosophy first points out that the gifts of Fortuna are transient and unreal. Possessions, high office and power, far from bringing happiness, cause worry and fear, as Boethius well knows by experience. Fame and a good name, though sought by men of noble spirit, lose their importance if we consider how infinitesimal the globe of the earth is compared to the vastness of the heavens. Man loses his divine heritage if he becomes dependent on such worldly values. On the other hand, he may gain immeasurably by their loss. Are not our true friends revealed by the blows of misfortune? Love, the great healer and unifier, without whom the universe would fall apart, remains untouched by ill fate. It is to everlasting values such as this, that we have to return, to "come home", in order to gain happiness.

But Philosophy had warned her disciple from the first:

> "If thou wishest to see truth
> With clear eyes,
> If thou wilt follow the straight path
> Without faltering:
> Leave pleasure behind,
> Be on guard against hope,
> Banish pain.
> For under their sway
> The mind is darkened and bound."

Detachment then is needed to find the way out of human suffering.

The next step is the recognition of true felicity. Every human being seeks happiness. Even those who hope to find it in Fortuna's domain are driven by an innate desire for the highest good, but in their ignorance they mistake an illusion

for reality. The influence of Plato is apparent throughout this part of the discussion as Philosophy stresses the memory of the inborn image of perfection, implanted in all creation. True happiness is measured by the degree to which we realize this ideal. To Boethius it is no mere "idea", but a part of Divinity Itself. It is in accordance with the deeply religious motive of his quest, that Philosophy sets up as the ultimate goal of man the union with God. The argument culminates in the following hymn:

"O Thou, who rulest the universe in perpetual order,
Creator of heaven and earth, who bade time issue
Out of eternity, motion out of rest everlasting.
To all that moves the source of movement, steady Thyself
Thou art and moveless. Thou gavest shape to fleeting matter
Not through external cause, but out of the inborn plan
Of pure excellence, radiant and without blemish.
All things Thou derivest from patterns on high, in supernal beauty
Thy spirit brings forth and maintains the world after Thy image,
Bidding the perfect produce parts of equal perfection.
Numbering the elements Thou bindst them, joining the flame
To the cold, the arid to moisture, lest fire too pure should escape,
Or sheer weight overpower the earth.
In the midst of threefold nature Thou hast set the all-moving soul
Articulate with harmonious members. Divided she holds
The twofold circles of motion, fathoming the depth of mind
And likewise driving the heavens, but always to herself
Returning. Thou callest forth from equal ground lesser beings
And lives, providing swift chariots for those moving above
And scattering them from your hand like seed over heaven and earth.
But at last obeying Thy law to Thee they return;
Led through fire they stream, burning to reach their home.
O Father, let my mind ascend to Thy exalted seat,
Reveal the source of light, and, having found the light,

Let my soul's vision be fixed on Thy radiance!
Disperse blinding clouds, break the heaviness of the earth,
And let Thy splendor shine forth, for Thou art bliss everlasting,
Beginning Thou art and end, mover, leader and path."

The clouds over Boethius' spirit are clearing away. Being reassured by Philosophy that man is not excluded from the divine order of the universe, and being convinced that his greatest happiness means no less than being at one with God, he realizes that there is no justification for any complaint over the loss of worldly possessions of any kind. But his questioning persists: "Why does evil exist at all, if the world is governed by the One all-powerful and all-good?" It sounds like an echo of Job's question: "Why do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?" But no mention is made of Boethius' biblical brother in misery.

Philosophy admits that "the world would be monstrous, if the vilest vessels were honored, while the most precious ones were neglected." But it is not so, for in fact the virtuous are not defeated, nor do the wicked carry the final victory. As she had explained before, the fulfilment of every being as a whole lies in the attainment of its perfection, and only within this perfection can a proper functioning of the divine order be maintained. The evil ones fall short of this aim and are rejected. Evil therefore means a loss of existence, a displacement, it is in truth a manifestation of impotence to reach the desired goal. In itself it has no existence. Fortune or misfortune can only be measured in relationship to the wholeness of our being. And thus virtue itself is the reward of the virtuous, evil the penalty of the wicked. It is not the suffering but the doing of wrong, that is so great a misfortune. The only release from it is punishment. Boethius asks: "And is punishment awaiting the soul after the death of the body?" Philosophy replies that there are penalties indeed inflicted,

some of them in due harshness, some in purging mercy, but of these it is not her present purpose to speak. Rather she leads her disciple to see that the evil-doer suffers greatly as long as he lives, and is to be regarded as a sick man. In this manner the accomplishment of a wicked purpose is in itself a penalty. The wicked, poor wretches, are to be pitied, not to be hated. There is no place for hatred in the heart of a wise man.

Philosophy's words do not fail to convince Boethius, but still it is not clear to him why mere chance is allowed to cause so much moral confusion among men. Does it not appear as if divine justice, which deals out punishments on a moral plane, is absent in the lower regions, where Fortuna dispenses her favors blindly, now to the virtuous, now to the wicked?

Fortune and misfortune, Philosophy replies, are properties of fate. If we do not understand its true nature, it will seem arbitrary, because fate is conditioned by time and space, and only within these limits has it reality at all. Moreover, human judgment is not infallible, but can err miserably regarding rewards and punishments, as we cannot even be sure to whom they are due. To grasp the meaning of fate we have to take a larger view. Seen in the light of divine intelligence, fate becomes providence. We have to understand that everything that happens proceeds according to the master-plan of the Creator. Within time and space we are only aware of fragments, which, linked together by cause and effect, form the chain of fate. The farther this chain of material compulsion, of growth and decay, of life and death, is removed from the divine center, the more room is allowed for complications. Related to the central law, however, everything becomes simple, because everything is revealed to be done for the good, to be in accordance with the divine plan.

In a magnificent hymn Philosophy now views God's creation from the summit of the pole, observing the ancient order

of the stars, the harmony of all nature, the rhythm of the seasons, the cycle of life and death. It is God, who keeps these ever revolving circles in motion through His law, which is love. Through love alone can the harmony of the universe be sustained, through love all lives stream back to the fountain-head of their being.

Therefore, Philosophy concludes, the wise should endeavour with all their vigor to occupy the center. Everything that veers from it means contempt for true happiness. Virtue is strength, she reminds the Roman Boethius, in whose language the two are identical. Strength and single-mindedness he needs in the struggle with fate, no less than the warrior in the midst of the battle.

The final poem of this argument invokes the example of the favorite hero of the Stoics, Hercules, who attained divinity by overcoming seemingly insuperable difficulties. It ends in a fiery note like a call to battle:

"Go ye brave ones where the steep road of great example
Leads to the center. Why do you show your backs,
O ye cowards? Conquered earth will give you the stars."

From here on the last trace of bitterness has vanished from Boethius' questions, and his fortitude and serenity are restored beyond doubt. But his active mind is not at rest before it has penetrated some further mysteries. The problem of chance is not yet cleared up. Since everything that happens is subordinated to providence, how can such a thing as mere chance exist? *Ex nihilo nihil,* is Philosophy's answer. Nothing happens in the universe without causal connection. Aristotle defines chance as follows: "Whenever something is done for the sake of a particular purpose, and owing to certain reasons something other than was intended results, that is called chance." A farmer may be digging in a field for the purpose of planting it, and come across a pot of gold, hidden there by

he knows not whom. The gold did not materialize out of nothing, but was actually buried there for some purpose. Two separate purposes coincide, and to our limited comprehension this has the character of chance. Before God however it belongs to the continuity of his universal plan.

Boethius continues: "If everything is controlled by providence, what place is there left for that responsibility of each for his conduct, based on free will? What sense is there in punishments or rewards if man acts out of predestined necessity, and not by his own decision? The responsibility for virtues as well as vices would rest entirely with the Creator Himself. There would be no place for hope and prayer, but only for fatalistic submission." Philosophy is well acquainted with such questions which suspect Providence to leave no rein to free will. But she also knows that the reason for this misconception lies in the limitations of human thought. Knowledge depends on the faculties of the knower. Roundness, for instance, can only be felt step by step by our sense of touch, whereas the eye takes it in at one glance. Philosophy speaks at some length about the different levels of human perception and understanding, and concludes with a comparison of these with the all embracing divine intelligence. God's view is whole and simultaneous, for He is eternal. We must not confuse eternity with perpetuity, which is endlessness in time. Likewise, Providence is something other than fore-knowledge. Fore-knowledge includes the element of time, whereas Providence is only possible in the state of eternity.

"Whatever lives in time proceeds through the present from the past to the future; there is nothing set in time that can embrace the whole space of its life at once. Tomorrow it grasps not yet, yesterday it has already lost. And even in this life of today you live no more than the changing, passing

moment. Whatever therefore suffers the condition of time, even though as Aristotle thought of the world, it never began nor would ever cease to be, its life being stretched out the full extent of time's infinity,—still it is not such as rightly to be thought eternal. For it does not comprehend and embrace the whole space of infinite life at once. The future it has not yet experienced. *That then which embraces and possesses the whole fulness of unlimited life at once, from which nothing of the future is absent, nothing of the past has flowed away, that rightly is called eternal.*"

And while our lives and acts rest within the realm of providence, we are free to decide and act successively in our temporal existence as beings endowed with reason.

"The freedom of men's will remains inviolate, and the laws are not unjust which assign rewards and punishments for wills unbound by necessity. Moreover, God who has knowledge of all things remains looking down from on high, and the ever present eternity of His vision agrees with the future character of our acts, dispensing to the good rewards, to the evil punishments. And not in vain are hopes and prayers laid before God. These, when prayed aright, cannot fail to be answered. Turn therefore from evil, practise virtue, uplift your souls to worthy hopes, offer humble prayers to heaven. Great is the necessity laid upon you of righteous living, if you will not deceive yourselves, seeing that your actions lie before the eyes of a judge who beholds all that is done."

And so Boethius' passionate and deeply probing quest ends on a note of humility and sublime calm.

It is hardly surprising that Christianity has claimed the "*Consolation*" as one of its most cherished books. It is true that Philosophy approaches Boethius in the classic garb of ancient Greece. She hands him the tools of Aristotelian logic

and Greek thought. But the theme of this dialogue is religious. Out of the depth of his soul Boethius is seeking truth. Never questioning the existence of a divine reality behind the ever changing aspects of the world within time and space, he finally gives himself up to this living spirit, rising above hate and rancor, and freeing himself from his suffering. This is the aim of every true religion.

The student of Vedanta is on familiar ground. Detachment, knowledge of the unreality of temporal values, understanding of the nature of fate, and the comprehension of eternity as a divine Now,—these concepts have occupied the great masters of the East from time immemorial. In some of the hymns, where intellectual doubts are not at play, the spirit of Lao-tze seems to speak to us in the classic language of the occident, or the Bhagavad Gita comes to our mind, as for instance when Philosophy calls upon her pupil's moral strength in the battle against fate. East and West are not so far apart as historical developments have made it appear, for "Truth is one. People call it by different names."

There are too many who are content to learn words by heart, and to put words in the place of experience. No one can really understand these things unless he has experienced them himself. —*Carl G. Jung.*

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern. —*William Blake.*

And ye shall seek Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. —*Jeremiah.*

BE STRONG

By Srimati Gayatri Devi

(An Address given at the Vedanta Centre, Boston, October 29, 1950.)

Every individual, in order to live in harmony with himself and the world wherein he must take his place, needs to adopt a philosophy. This philosophy can be drawn from his particular religious faith, or it can be based upon his knowledge of life, or it can come as a result of his observation and experience. However, no matter from what source and how it comes, it is important that he should have it, not only as a theory but as something that can be put into practice and used for his own advantage.

Nowadays we come upon a great many people who complain of ill adjustment to life. They find themselves out of place in the environment in which they have been born; they are not at home with the society of which they are a part; they are restless and discontented. They do not know what they want nor what to do with their own lives. For such people, when life becomes problematical, help can be found in the adoption and exercise of a philosophy.

A man may say, "I cannot accept what is before me, nor can I adapt myself to what is immediately surrounding me, so I have two alternatives: either endure it or find some way of escaping it." We know that there are many people who take the first course of enduring all things because they think that there is no way out of the difficulty staring them in the face. These are usually the maladjusted ones. I make this statement not as a criticism, for I truly believe that human nature has infinite power for transcending its weakness. It is always the distorted outlook which will impose upon the person an attitude of morbid toleration. If a person endures a situation without trying to understand the reason for it

or without adjusting himself to it, he would derive no benefit from such endurance. In fact, he may find himself left with scars and marks, with resentments and grievances and some very harmful effects upon his mind and character.

The person who says, "I will take the second course; let me escape," will seek a way by which he may run away from his immediate trouble and thus leave it behind. However, he will soon learn that there is really no escape. This knowledge may come to him as a surprise or as a revelation. He will discover that one cannot run away from anything. The same or similar problems may await him elsewhere, perhaps in a new environment or under different circumstances.

This is merely a survey in order to point out that unless a person has a definite knowledge of life's purpose or the workings of the laws of destiny, unless he realizes the meaning and significance of experience, and if he is devoid of a basic philosophy, he will be confused and disturbed and unable to solve his own problems. On the contrary, if he is able to review life as it is, measure his own strength, discover his own resources, if he can be brought to the enlightenment of his own potentialities, he will desire neither to endure nor to escape; he will adjust, he will overcome, he will transcend. And by these very acts, which will require will, understanding, forbearance, and above all, great clarity of mind in regard to life's issues, he will become a very strong individual. In fact, his very philosophy will endow him with strength.

No matter who we are, or what pattern the course of our destiny weaves, sooner or later we all learn that we cannot survive in this world without a certain amount of strength. If this strength is not cultivated in our early years and if we have been handicapped through lack of training and discipline in the formative period of our life, we will conduct ourselves very poorly in the years to come.

Here I would like to point out the harm caused by the domination of families or parents over their children. Suppose a child is of weak caliber; domination would breed fear and insecurity in him and he would mature with a definite handicap. The child in his weakness and fear would yield to the strong parents, but the result would be disastrous. Therefore, one respects the parents and teachers who exert the right influence upon the children, who help them to grow strong and to discover their inherent higher possibilities. In order to accomplish this, the parents and teachers themselves must aim to be wise. They need to be strong, well integrated and farsighted before they can offer the children the advantage of their own strength and development. The world is full of parents who are adults but not really mature. Thus we cannot expect the desired result.

It is strength we want and we must begin to acquire it from early years, as it comes gradually and not suddenly. Most of us find a philosophy after we have learned to think for ourselves. Sometimes the religious faith under which we have been nurtured is not sufficient for us. Unfortunately this happens because Truth is often confined by the doctrines and dogmas men have imposed upon It. Unenlightened human beings in their limited knowledge try to interpret Truth by their small concepts and ideas. Such presentation creates conflict in our minds. We can remove them only when we have found something which coincides with our way of thinking and fills our individual need. After all, philosophy must be the accurate knowledge of life, of its laws and principles without the coloring or distortion or the imposition of unillumined minds. If we in our good fortune discover it, then by learning its use and application, we can come out of all our troubles. That means if we are maladjusted, unhappy and caught in struggles and conflicts, in

time and with sincere efforts we will be freed from these conditions. However, without exercising our strength or knowledge of Truth we can not hope to accomplish this.

I have been most grateful for the boldness and freedom of the Vedanta philosophy. It is daring in its call to man who is here to develop his inherent potentiality. Swami Vivekananda, that fearless apostle of Vedanta, speaks with the fire which was characteristic of his great personality. He says, "Infinite strength is religion. Strength is goodness. Weakness is sin. All sins and evils can be summed up in one word: weakness. It is weakness that is the motive power in all evil doing. It is weakness that is the source of all selfishness. It is weakness that makes man injure others. Let them all know what they are. Let them repeat day and night what they are: *Soham! Soham!* Let them imbibe it with their mothers' milk, this strength, 'I am He! I am He!' "

To some, of course, the latter part of the passage will sound unfamiliar, but not to those who have been nurtured in Vedanta. It is the keynote of this philosophy that man must eventually realize that he is a potential Divinity. There is no teaching so stimulating, yet so revolutionary, so disturbing, as this. For a man to come out with the proclamation that he is not a sinner, nor born of inquity, nor is he to accept weakness and depart from this existence crushed and defeated, is to recognize himself as a conqueror. Each man must realize who and what he is. He must know that he is Divine, that he is powerful, that he is unlimited in his strength.

It is easy to have superficial knowledge of a philosophy or merely to believe in it. One can mildly use affirmations and concepts in order to derive benefit from them. However, he must go further; he needs to imbibe the ideas sufficiently so that he can prove their worth in times of his own need.

What we believe in and what we are, are two different things. There must be perfect harmony between them. Therefore, our task is to show the caliber of our mind and spirit through strength and determination, by the will to do and power to overcome, and thus demonstrate the practicability of the teaching we have made our own.

Each individual has his particular way of deriving strength. All of us face the battle of life in our own way and find out whether we can win or lose. To win, we must summon all our strength, making ourselves aware that we possess it. Its source lies within ourselves, in the conviction of our own divine potentiality.

Of course, there are different kinds of strength. Indeed a person may feel fortunate if he is endowed with a strong body. Good health and muscular stamina are desirable assets. Here in this civilized country wrestling is a sport enjoyed and admired by millions of people. This is one game I have failed to appreciate. However, it has its place. A powerful physique is representative of one aspect of man's strength. To work hard one needs unlimited physical strength and endurance.

Strength of mind imparts self-confidence to an individual. Let none of us underestimate the value of self-confidence. It can only harm us when distorted by egotistic notions or desire for self-importance. Man needs faith in his ability, talents and accomplishments of mind, faith untainted by pride or conceit. How many people suffer through lack of confidence. Psychologists point out the inferiority complex of man which comes from the sense of inadequacy within himself. Through therapy and analysis they strive to arouse the "ego strength" which needs to be developed so that by it the person may help himself.

There is another type of strength. It can come from

material advantage. A great many people who are fortunate in life, who have wealth, comfort and protection, can have a sense of security. They have not known that side of life which tries a human spirit through ceaseless toil and struggle. However, this strength is more artificial than real, for it may not stand the test of experience. One needs that strength which makes man independent of all outer conditions, strength abounding in endurance. Men who are bolstered by earthly fortunes do not really possess it. I knew a gentleman who used to attend Services during Swami Paramananda's lifetime. He was a bombastic person and very aggressive. Why? Because he had been successful, he came from a fine family, and he had means. It was interesting to watch the two personalities, Swami Paramananda and this man. The latter's aggressiveness was of a kind that he did not hesitate dictating to the Swami. We saw him in later years, first after the Depression and again in the throes of sickness. With the loss of some of his material assets he had lost his nerve; illness had made him fearful and helpless like a child. His arrogance had diminished. Adversity had made him a little humble. He really was a broken man, more nervously and spiritually. What happened? He did not possess the enduring character nor the philosophic attitude, nor the understanding detachment so necessary to operate steadily in this world. The illustration only proves how brittle a person can be under a self-confident exterior.

Let us now take a different type of human being, one not so fortunate in material circumstances but who exhibits considerable fortitude in adversity and trial. He may even appear frail physically, yet in him we recognize a growing strength made more substantial through his experiences. How did he acquire this strength? Through proper adjustment to life's ordeals and vicissitudes, by gracious endurance, and

by understanding and overcoming them in a true spirit. In other words, he benefited from the natural failures and disappointments by consciously turning them into good. This is the way of the great, whose strength sustains them in the moments of despondency and defeat. It was at such a moment that Christ cried out, "Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The inevitable human experience is to pass through helplessness, fleeting though it may be, in order to realize fully one's inner strength adequate in crisis or disaster.

We always come through the crisis better for the experience. This is true in the case of every individual. In every life there is success and glory, and again test and tribulation. Each must meet emergency and ordeal in order to display the mettle of his character and personality. How comforting are the words of Swami Vivekananda: "Glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I committed great blunders, now glad to enter peace." Here was someone who had been through extremes of experiences—poverty, humiliation, great mental suffering, and again he had received honor and ovation worthy of a monarch. Through it all he held his head high and his spirit untouched, always strong, always the conqueror who feared nothing.

What we need is to remember that life is given as an opportunity to bring out the best in us so that we may prove our strength. Its purpose is not to crush us. Unless we make such conviction a part of our basic philosophy, we cannot maintain our real bearing and perspective. Shadows of doubt and fear are likely to fall upon the mind and becloud its outlook. It is then we must remember what and who we are. Swami Vivekananda, quoting the Upanishads, says, "Soham! I am He! I am the Divine, strong and powerful, and not a weak mortal." Whenever we forget, we should try to regain this truth by endeavor.

Sometimes in our weakness and feeling of helplessness we create bondages for ourselves. Dependent natures become more dependent. Some in their dependence even live on others' strength and vitality. Instead, they should draw on their own inner strength. It is a sad state of affairs. Such people are to be helped so that they may be freed from the habit of leaning. By proper guidance they can be taught to stand on their own feet. Vedanta never encourages dependence which makes an individual weak. Weakness has no place in the teachings of Vedanta. "*Nayam Atma balahinena lavya.*" These are bold words. "That Self cannot be attained by one who is weak." The man who would not make the effort to find his own strength may as well forget about self-realization. It is not for him. It is for the one who will work diligently to overcome his weakness.

Let us not expect any sudden miracle of transformation from ourselves. Growth and change come by a slow and patient process. We are not born a Buddha or a Christ. Our character and personality have gradually to be molded out of the material at hand—material of our basic nature, mind and tendencies. Once I asked Swami Paramananda why those who had the direct influence of a great philosophy and the benefit of close association with a holy person did not become saintly. Swamiji pointed out that transformation of a human life is slow and painstaking. Then he added, "You see, I can only work with the material that is brought to me." Ever since it has become clear to me that some have much to learn and overcome and saintliness is a high measure in the scale of evolution. It cannot be achieved in haste no matter what opportunities are available to the individual. Nor can it be found until the material which comprises a human being has been purified and refined. That is the reason we do not have Christs or Buddhas by the dozens. They were supermen of

Self-realization. Others can reach the height according to their capacity and in time. Remember this when you are disappointed in yourself because you have not made the grade or when you are depressed by failures. Remember that you must have patience with yourself. We need insight into our own nature and real humility which helps immensely in our adjustment to all conditions that come our way in order to lead us to integration of personality and eventual Self-realization.

You cannot say that such teaching is not practical or that it will not work. If it does not work, it is because you have not yet applied it properly. It will work. But it is not going to work like a miracle. We are too hasty in our desire to see results. If we want a thing, we want it immediately. Do not ever look for spiritual fruition quickly. Give yourself time. Neither be discouraged if you find there are too many obstacles on your path. There is one element which can be a problem for the individual: it is fear. We may recognize its source and cause, yet be unable to cope with it. Be patient and have faith. Let me assure you that fear can be overcome. As you unfold your divinity, fear will vanish. Knowledge of one's Self destroys all fear. *Anandam-Brahmana Vidvan no bibheti Kada-Chana.* "Knowing the Blissful Brahman one becomes free of all fear." You can no longer be afraid. You become daring and say, "Let come what will! I can meet all, for I am not afraid."

In conclusion let me say, no matter what discoveries you have made about yourself, of your natural weaknesses, fears and doubts, do not let them hinder you. Always take the positive stand. Put into practice and use your knowledge of your higher being, and thus counteract all negative thoughts and feelings. Be strong in your aversion to cowardliness and fear as they make themselves known. Be able to say, "Noth-

ing is stronger than my real self, for it is mighty, it is divine." Believe in it with all your heart and soul, for you are strong in your own strength, mighty in the might of God which is the real Self within you. Draw from within your power, depend less on the externals. Prove the influence and merit of your philosophy. It will bring results only to those who would give it even half an opportunity. If you do your part in keeping your outlook clear and free of distortion, and if you become fearless and courageous in meeting life's inevitable issues by remaining close to the center of your being and learning to operate from that Center, then you need have no uncertainty about your final achievement. Defeat and failure is not your goal. Achievement is your goal. You must have faith in it, the kind of faith which remains dominant under all conditions. Then you will become really strong and free too, and your example will inspire and enable others to overcome the obstacles on their path.

TO JESUS ON HIS BIRTHDAY

By *Edna St. Vincent Millay*

For this your mother sweated in the cold,
For this you bled upon the bitter tree:
A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold;
A paper wreath; a day at home for me.
The merry bells ring out, the people kneel;
Up goes the man of God before the crowd;
With voice of honey and with eyes of steel
He drones your humble gospel to the proud.
Nobody listens. Less than the wind that blows
Are all your words to us you died to save.
O Prince of Peace! O Sharon's dewy Rose!
How mute you lie within your vaulted grave.
The stone the angel rolled away with tears
Is back upon your mouth these thousand years.

DANCE YE ALL!

By *Sister Daya*

(A Class talk given in the Temple of the Universal Spirit, Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California.)

Those who were privileged to come into intimate touch with Swami Paramananda's work, through his books, his utterance and, more especially, through personal contact, could not fail to sense the motion and the grace which imbued it and which, in the Swami himself, were manifest in every thought, word and action. This he called the "Rhythm of Life." Many will remember reading his poem of that title in his volume of poems of the same name, and since it forms a perfect prelude to our present theme, let me share it with you:

"Walk in the rhythm of life;
Your limbs will not tire.
Sing with the rhythm of life;
Your voice will gain sweetness.
Dance in the rhythm of life;
Your feet will not touch the ground.
Breathe in rhythm;
Think in rhythm;
Talk in rhythm;
Walk in rhythm;
Sing in rhythm;
Dance in rhythm:
Let rhythmic be your life!"

Among the world's great scriptures, we shall find in the *Tao-teh King* of Lao-tze the same flowing quality, as in his philosophy he lays stress upon the spontaneous movement of the One Infinite Life through the instrumentality of all creation.

TAO, the indefinable, absolute, omnipresent Principle, is inferred since It cannot be described, and in this process certain symbols are used—water, for example. According to Lao-tze "The highest virtue is like water: it benefits everything without exciting rivalries. We should be like water, choosing the lowest place which all others avoid. We are then closely akin to TAO. . . . It (TAO) resembles the great rivers that flow into the seas, but which have their origin in the little streams of the valleys. . . . Nothing is more fragile than water, yet of all the agencies that attack hard substances nothing can surpass water nor take its place. Therefore the weak are conquerors of the strong. Everyone knows this, but few practise it!"

One who moves in the spirit of TAO is therefore like water that wears away the hardest stone, water that is beautiful and all-filling, seeking the lowliest places, brimming over to nourish and sustain the whole land. The flow which it embodies is found everywhere in all things. We see it in the swaying of trees, the blowing of grasses, the curving waves—the whole rhythm and harmony that we know as Nature. Nor is it absent from internal nature. In seeking, however, to establish this rhythm in our own inward life, we find that certain qualifications must first of all be present in the soul. Of these, one of the most intimately related to this natural movement of life is the quality of *pliability*.

We know how essential this is to the attainment of outer grace and grace of spirit is equally dependent on it. The dancer, for instance, must be pliable, must be able to move and turn and follow different time-beats with a sense of complete balance and poise. Pliability plus balance and poise means great strength. Only the strong can exhibit grace, poise, pliability and rhythm.

With the dance (and I am speaking of the round dance

and from the feminine point of view) the essential thing is to move in perfect unison with the partner, to anticipate his every turn, so that nothing can surprise one into pulling away or dragging back on him, but rather to move with him as one spirit.

Holding this picture in mind, let us imagine that Life Itself has asked us to dance. We accept. We accept when we are born. It is then—at least for this present incarnation—that the dance begins, and in its course Life takes us through many strange places, pleasant open spots where our steps glance with the sunbeams, and through places of utter darkness where we cannot see our way and are lost unless we trust and follow. The step often changes; sometimes it is slow, sometimes it is fast: the rhythm constantly varies. But if we are worthy of our unpredictable Partner we shall seek always to move with Him and be as light in His mighty arms as a cloud is in the sky.

Something akin to this attitude is held by the great devotees of India, who approach God with the sense of complete surrender that is characteristic of the woman. Without reserve, they give themselves over to the Divine Power and say, with the Christ: "Not my will but Thine be done!" They become, as in Sri Ramakrishna's simile—like dry leaves blown by the wind of God.

There comes to my mind something that Swami Paramananda said shortly after I met him: "In the spiritual life we must always have the light touch." The light touch is what I have been describing. It means that one moves with the rhythm of life and accepts all as from the hand of that One. Surrender also means just this. In our present state of mind we fail to grasp its significance; we say: "I shall accept this and this, but that thing I cannot accept. It disturbs my particular scheme of living."

Never think, however, that surrender means yielding to dishonor or ugliness or cruelty or any of the things born of ignorance; for these are contrary to the spirit of love or oneness. Should you yield to these elements and supinely accept them, it would be impossible for you to dance in rhythm with Life or unite with the Divine Ideal.

The only heart that is capable of practising surrender is the heart that is cleansed by the great integrating, unifying principles of existence. Such a heart alone can catch the cosmic beat of the Divine dance, and can accept the outer event, not with a sense of grim necessity, but with joy that it comes from the hand of that One who leads us, along with all created things, in this magical dance of existence.

Let us now take a quick glance at our life as we live it day by day. We are constantly making plans, which is well and good if we can quickly and easily lay them aside; otherwise they become traps. For unexpected things arise that compel a change in our schedule. Perhaps these things may seem unimportant to us, but they may not be unimportant to others. Here is where discrimination must enter in. We have to learn when to adjust and when to hold firm to our original design and whether or not great principles are involved. For we must remember that surrender never means floundering helplessly in the flux of things.

Suppose that we have to abandon a certain plan because of another person's necessity or even thoughtlessness. It is too late to rectify the situation: we are forced to accept it—but in what spirit? Do we drag back like the poor dancer and loudly complain that everything has been disrupted and our day ruined? It may well be ruined, not so much by the circumstances as by our own rigid nature.

In these small daily occurrences pliability is what is needed. We have to learn quickly to let go—to take the great

Partner's lead and move forward easily, without stubborn resistance, feeling as we do so that it is all part of the Divine play. If we can do this in the God-spirit—that is, with a recognition of a Higher directive, we shall not lose anything. Probably we shall not even lose the thing that we had planned to do, for we shall no doubt do it on another day or it will come back to us in another form. Nothing will be lost; rather our gain will be great, for our very act of surrender will quicken in us intuition and the power of discrimination, will make us better able to decide when to say "yes" and when to say "no."

In the *Tao-teh King* (Mr. Witter Bynner's translation) it is stated of the man of balance and true discernment: "He has his yes, he has his no." In other words, our "yes" and "no" should not be dependent on rules and regulations, or on the opinions of people, but upon something deep, profound within our own being, something which tells us: "This time this is to be done and that must be sacrificed. Right here is where Life wants you to be — not there, although your heart may long differently."

No one can instruct us in these things. No one really can teach us wherein lies our duty at any given moment, if God does not teach us. It may well be that we shall refuse to do the thing that is to be done, shall seek to step aside from the dance and reject our Partner. Our great safeguard from such a misfortune is the ability to lay aside a rigid pattern at need, and do it as easily, as gracefully as a young girl who, at the change of the music, moves with her partner from a waltz to a Charleston.

I believe that there is a wellspring in the human heart, from which—could we unseal it—would come a marvelous out-flowing of life, love, beauty, joy, conforming to a divine pattern, but never set, never rigid; lovely as a thousand sunsets, each one different yet all the same.

These things require something beyond the brain, beyond the cut and dried rules of ordinary living. Occasionally we find a true genius moving with these great rhythms. We are apt not to understand him; he upsets our little preconceived notions; but in the end, when we gain the long view, we see that he was like a fresh breeze blowing from the top of Mt. Olympus. This type of consciousness does not come with calculation; this state of mind bloweth only as the Spirit listeth. If there is calculation present, stubbornness, resentment or any of these elements, know the genius to be spurious, born not of God but of the isolated self.

Christ said: "Love worketh no ill to its neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law." If people try to be a law unto themselves through egotism and vanity, they will not succeed. The rhythm of life cannot be bent to our small measure, nor can we achieve it through the modification of the outer forms of our life and our outer way of doing things, any more than we can achieve simplicity by throwing our worldly goods out of the window. The Divine Dancer is subtle, everywhere present, moving all forms yet without form, and the only way that we can assimilate His rhythm and express it is by giving ourselves utterly to Him.

This Dancer in infinite space is pictured by the Hindus as Lord Shiva, third Person in the Hindu Trinity—the Destroyer or Transformer. They depict Him as dancing the *Tandava* — the cosmic Dance.

> "Dance, my heart! Dance today with joy!
> The strains of love fill the days and the nights
> with music, and the world is listening to
> its melodies:
> Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm
> of this music. The hills and the sea and
> the earth dance. The world of man dances in
> laughter and tears. . . ."

So sings the Indian poet, Kabir, and such is the Dance of Shiva!

This idea of the cosmic Dancer we find running through other faiths as well. In a Gnostic fragment, translated by G.R.S. Mead there is a description of a ritual in which Jesus calls upon His disciples to dance. Whether it be the record or some superphysical experience or of an actual happening one cannot say. All we are told is that it is a Gnostic hymn from the Leucian *Acts of John,* about 130 A.D. In the course of it, Jesus, after gathering His disciples around Him in a ring, commanded them, saying:

> "I would pipe: dance ye all! . . .
> All whose nature is to dance doth dance. . . .
> Who danceth not knows not what is being done. . . .
> Now answer to My dancing!
> See thyself in Me who speak;
> And seeing what I do
> Keep silence on My Mysteries.
> Understand by dancing, what I do; . . .
> I would be kept in time with holy souls.
> In Me know thou the Word of Wisdom. . . .
> But as for Me if thou wouldst know what
> I was: In a word I am the Word who did
> play or dance all things, and was not
> shamed at all. 'Twas I who leaped and
> danced! . . ."

"(And having danced these things with us, . . . the Lord went forth, and we as though beside ourselves, or wakened out of deep sleep, fled each our several ways.)"

Can not we, in our modern world, dance with the Beloved, following the stately measure by which He leads the stars through space and the tiniest creature to its ultimate great destiny?

IN THE NAME OF MY PEOPLE

By *Nipo-Tahoche-Num Strongheart*

(Concluded)

Sister Daya: As a final question will you not tell us the place that religion holds in the life of the Indian? As I understand it, they do not have set worship such as we have, and yet they are possessed of a very potent spirit and belief. Can you enlighten us concerning this?

Strongheart: Well, yes. Words may mean a lot to white people, and may not. Personally I do not place very much confidence in the word, because one might talk all day long and not mean a word of it; but what one feels within one's self, what one thinks, that is what counts. So with Indian people in their prayer: it is more or less inside of them. You cannot deceive God, we know that. No matter how much you may pray, if it is not out of your heart and soul, it means nothing; it just goes with the wind. So words don't count. That's what I think.

Definitely we do not congregate as do your groups who all sing the same songs and say the same prayers, like talking out of a phonograph. You can teach a parrot to say the same thing. It is what you yourself think or feel, how you regard these things, that matters; God listens only to that. You know what is in your heart; you do not have to say any words. So that our religion is a definite, personal relationship between God and man, as individuals, not as a group.

Sister Daya: But there is with the Indians a very powerful feeling of the Presence of Deity everywhere, is there not? Are not the Indians an extremely religious people—actually, in their hearts?

Strongheart: Very much so; we never disregard that; we feel that God is in all things—in the tree, the rock, the leaves,

the grass—and all things are God's creation. They are part of that Spirit, and That is ever present. We never deny that, and that is why we do not have a labeled name for what we call the "Great Mystery" or the "Great Spirit." It is not a thing that we just hear about or go into a church to find. It is wherever we are. It is within us and we are part of God. We are all one. So wherever we are, God or, if you want, the Great Mystery, or the Great Spirit, or the Great Maker is present.

Sister Daya: It is then more than a philosophic theory with the Indians. Would you not say it is a living worship?

Strongheart: They give thanks for all things; they pray for all things; they pay tribute for every gift. For the sun, they pay tribute to the sun—not as a deity, but as an emissary of God, as a messenger of light. He heals our wounds; he gives conception to mother earth. People say we are sun-worshippers, but it isn't that: we recognize the moon, the stars, trees, the rock—all. Everything is God. Life is God!

It is not necessary to preach that Ramakrishna was an Incarnation. He came to do good to the world, not to trumpet his own name. . . . Only one kind of work I understand, and that is doing good to others. . . . I am a Vedantist, Satchit-ananda—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute — is my God . . . By the word "Incarnation" are meant those who have attained that Brahmanhood, those who have realized this Freedom in this very life. I do not find any specialty in Incarnations: all beings from Brahma down to a clump of grass will attain to liberation-in-life in course of time, and our duty lies in helping all to reach that state. This help is called religion, the rest is irreligion. This help is work, the rest is evil-doing—I see nothing else. —*Swami Vivekananda.*

FROM A DISCIPLE'S NOTE BOOK

(Continued from the Fall Issue)

In that earlier period, at the California Ashrama, the workers did not come home at evening — after work on the grounds, marketing, or a walk in the hills—to a house lighted by electricity, but to old-fashioned lamp-light, which entailed far more labor, but which gave to everything a primitive softness and charm. The telephone also was absent in those days and there was not the constant ringing of that imperative bell which later injected itself into the mountain silence and claimed certain ones as its slave, obedient to its call.

The large living-room of the Cloister had to serve as a lecture hall on those days when out-door Services were impossible, and also for the evening Classes. A small, screened extension at the rear provided a makeshift dining-room, but was too small to hold the ice-box—for which also there was no space in the tiny kitchen—and which therefore formed an enameled background in the living-room for the Swami whenever he conducted Services indoors.

There were no guests at that time, for the large Guest House was not built till 1926, and the few accommodations available were barely sufficient to take care of the resident members. The disciple remembers sleeping for several months on an army cot in the living-room, which necessitated arising at dawn in order to be up and out before vagrant members wandered in to say "good morning."

It was at that time that the Centre's devoted friends, Mrs. Fischer with her daughter and her daughter's husband—the Nelsons—came on from Boston, that they might live near the Ashrama. It was a big move and a tremendous change for them, especially as Mr. Nelson left behind a fine position in his home city and knew no one in California save the Ashrama members. The lower cabins which were allotted them,

must have seemed wild and primitive after a lifetime in conservative Boston town. But they gallantly braved the wilderness, and conquered. Mrs. Fischer passed out some years ago, but the Nelsons still come faithfully to the Services in the Temple of the Universal Spirit which stands where a hill stood when they first arrived. A verse in an Ashrama topical song, known as the "Song of the Goblin Army", pictures humorously their forlorn condition during those difficult days when indoor bathrooms and modern conveniences seemed lost and gone forever, and Boston, a dream of the past.

"Came the Fischers on from Boston,
Oh, they thought that they were lost on
A mountain-side ten thousand miles away.
Said Mrs. Fischer, "Pioneers
Of '49 knew just such fears;
P'raps our pussy cat will keep the bears at bay!"

Then the disciple remembers Jack Miller, the little Jewish disciple whose name is written in her golden book of memories. Already stricken with tuberculosis when he arrived at La Crescenta, he was forced finally to go to a small private Sanitarium in the neighboring village of Tujunga. There the disciple saw him literally fade away, but never did she see a waning of his inward strength, courage or devotion. The mere mention of the Swami's name would bring a radiant smile to his face, and he died holding fast to a blessed flower from the Ashrama shrine, which the Swami had brought him a day or two before. Only once did the disciple see him break down, and that was not owing to fear or physical suffering, but to the fact that he could not be present at the Ashrama's daily shrine Services. When he spoke of this, he wept. After that, the disciple sought to duplicate the Service as well as she could in the bare little hospital room. Looking back on this, she is filled with wonder at the strangeness of life. His tears came because he could not meditate and

worship before the shrine, whereas there have been those who, when this blessing was open to them, failed to avail themselves of it, or came with indifferent spirit.

It is reminiscent of the story which Sri Ramakrishna used to tell, concerning two friends who started out one afternoon in search of entertainment. One friend said: "I hear there is a very holy man living nearby. Every day he talks to those who come, of his divine realizations. Let us go and listen to him."

The other friend replied: "Oh, no! I don't want to do that. I would much rather go to a music hall and see a show."

So it was arranged that each should go his own way, the one to the place of the holy man, the other, to his place of entertainment. But, strangely enough, the first man, seated at the feet of the teacher, kept thinking: "What a fool I am! Why didn't I go with my friend and have a good time instead of being forced to sit here and listen to this saint expound?" while the friend bitterly reproached himself as he looked on at the play. "Here I am," he said, "wasting my time in this cheap theatre when I might be hearing divine words from the lips of a man of realization. How I wish that I were there instead of here!"

As a matter of fact, Sri Ramakrishna used to explain, of the two friends the one who went to the music hall was really in the company of the holy man, while the one who chose to go there and listen to his words, actually in his consciousness was in the music hall.

Another who has ever been a true supporter of the Swami and his work was the one known through the years as "B.B." —Brother Beliaeff. He was a Russian brother, born in the Ukraine but imbued with the spirit of young America. He never felt, he said, as if he belonged to his own people, but once he had reached the shores of the New World, he felt completely at home.

He first made contact with the Swami in New York City when he was connected with the Vedanta Society there, and later came to the west coast. Young, agile, full of life, he used to delight the Ashrama members, whenever he came up their hill, by singing songs of his native land in a rich tenor voice, and by dancing Ukrainian dances with real abandon and great muscle control. He wore for these occasions the native high boots, and was able to sit on air, so it seemed, and kick one leg and then the other straight out before him with apparent ease.

The Swami always enjoyed hearing him sing the more serious Russian songs, which he did (and still does) at the Sunday Services, of course always using the Russian words, which gave a rich, sonorous sound. On one such occasion, a so-called Hindu teacher who happened to be present, came up to B.B. after the Service and exclaimed: "Tell me, where did you learn Sanskrit?" Whether B.B. enlightened him or not as to the true nature of the language he was singing, I do not know; being, however, of a most kindly nature, he probably spared the man.

But no more mention of special friends. There are too many of them, too dear to the Ashrama heart, to run the risk of omitting any, and there is no space to mention all.

In larger outlines stand out the big events, like the building and dedication of the Ashrama Guest House and the Temple of the Universal Spirit, with its connecting arcades and adjacent library, study and book-room. The mass of the Ashrama increased and expanded under the hand of man. Some of the building and the preparation of the ground was done by the resident brothers, who by this time were beginning to trickle into the Ashrama and inhabit the new upper cabins. Brother George practically leveled the hill on which the temple was to stand, going up and down with his tractor

at a fearsome angle, while another brother, Stanley Dawes, controlled the drag at the rear, thus earning for brother George the title of "St. George and the drag-on!"

Nature, meanwhile, had not been idle and easily outstripped man in the profusion of its output. Trees that were tiny saplings in the beginning of the Swami's venture, grew rapidly toward the sky and interlaced their branches. The pine trees below the terrace little by little shut off the view of the road and shut the Ashrama off more and more from the world. And as the works of Nature and of man combined to embellish this blessed spot, so the spiritual structure increased, as the Swami poured out his heart in glowing words and endless consecrated activity.

Every night at bed-time, when all were gathered in the living-room (after an evening spent before a blazing fire in the great fire-place, or — on warm evenings — in a happy group out on the lawn under the great, brilliant stars), the Swami would plead with his workers *to be* the thing that they believed. He tried to approach them from every angle, so as to strike a real flame from their hearts; but whether he succeeded or not, a subtle almost palpable flame emanated from him and warmed and irradiated the whole atmosphere which became ignited with a spiritual fire that has never gone out. As a lovely lady, the disciple's own mother, quoted on the evening of the dedication of the Guest House:

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness. . . ."

The years have proved how true this is of the Swami and of the things of beauty which flowed from his hands — from his Soul. Never shall they pass into nothingness!

TO BE CONTINUED

BEYOND THE REALM OF REASON*

Once Swami Vivekananda while he was moving in the Himalayan regions, became the guest of a certain person in a village. He woke up one night and found that the villagers were taking part in a big procession with a man who was said to have been possessed by a ghost. A large number of people with gongs, cymbals, drums and bells followed the man who was being carried in a cot. At one stage the Swamiji saw a red-hot axe being applied to the hair of the man who was alleged to have been possessed. Strange to say, not a single hair was singed, and the Swamiji who was a staunch adherent to ratiocination thought that there must be some trick done by the man who was using the red-hot axe. He himself therefore went near this man and touched the axe with his fingers. At once he felt a burning sensation, and exclaimed—"There are many supernatural things which our philosophy and reason cannot explain."

One person who has mastered life is better than a thousand persons who have mastered only the contents of books, but no one can get anything out of life without God. If I were looking for a master of learning, I should go to Paris to the colleges where the higher studies are pursued, but if I wanted to know about the perfection of life, they could not tell me there.

Where then should I go? To (someone who has) a nature that is pure and free and nowhere else: there I should find the answer for which I so anxiously inquire.

—*Meister Eckhart.*

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*This story is from "Vedanta Through Stories," by Swami Sambuddhananda; also in this issue, "If Anybody Steals Your Shirt Give Him the Cloak Also" and "The Ways of a Saint."

TRIBUTE TO A DEVOTEE

In the passing of Brother John the Vedanta Centre has sustained a second loss, so soon after the demise of Sister Shanta. Brother John was a consecrated member of the Centre's resident Community, greatly respected for his many fine qualities.

John Quick came to Swami Paramananda in the year of 1938 at a time when Ananda Ashrama in La Crescenta, California, needed more man power to carry on its work. He was a person of mature years and varied experiences. Immediately he made his place in the group and won the affection of everyone by his warm and happy nature.

Five years later, Brother John took up his residence in Boston. It is here that he poured out his heart's devotion and best services into the work of the Centre and the Ashrama in Cohasset. As the latter was being gradually developed from a temporary summer resort into a comfortable Retreat-home, Brother played a vital part in its improvement. He created the half-acre vegetable and flower garden out of a soil neglected for years and full of big rocks. He was tireless in his desire to serve and never said "no" when asked to do something extra. He would plan a heavy undertaking and comment, "One of these days when I am resting, I will do this." Then he would laugh aloud. Another one of his remarks was "Life is one continual round of pleasure." This he demonstrated in his daily life, as his buoyancy of spirit was habitual and nothing could ever dampen it.

With great sincerity he lived the spiritual life setting a real example in his endurance and stability of character. He commanded the admiration of everyone by meeting anger without reacting to it in anger or even showing irritation. Children loved him and he had real influence on them. His

own heart was like that of a child, pure and free and without the least trace of worldiness. His strength inspired confidence in his friends who came to him for comfort and moral support.

When it was discovered that he had an ailing heart and by rest he could become well, his real discipline began. His mental stamina was such that he would not de dominated by a physical condition. Rest was an abnormal state for his temperament. Thus he only curtailed his activities but did not abandon them. He would accept little or no service from anyone, but instead kept himself useful until the very end.

Brother John is greatly missed, yet we cannot grieve. His spirit, so detached and happy, felt no reluctance in leaving this plane of existence. His own words, profound and simple, ring in our ears, "Today we are here, and tomorrow we are gone; it really does not matter."

IF ANYBODY STEALS YOUR SHIRT GIVE HIM THE CLOAK ALSO

Pavhari Baba was a great saint of Ghazipur. He used to live in a cave on a bank of the Ganges and spend most of his time in penance and meditation. One day while he was busy with meditation, a thief entered his cave and stole the only dish and lota (water pot) he possessed. When after a few minutes, Pavhari Baba had finished his morning prayers and meditation and got up from his seat he saw the thief walking away from the cave with these two articles. He reflected that the thief must be in great need, and seeing that he had not taken his blanket as well, took it up and began to walk in the direction of the thief trying to catch him up. The latter, however, thinking that Pavhari Baba wanted to catch

hold of him, started running. The saint said, "Don't be afraid of me in the least. I am not going to hand you over to the police. You must be in greater need than I and I am coming to give you my blanket which you have left behind." The thief, amazed at the great generosity of the saint, came and fell at his feet. He turned over a new leaf completely, abandoning his evil ways of life. It is said that the thief later on became a saint of a high order.

THE WAYS OF A SAINT

A saintly man used to sit under a mango tree for meditation. Once when the tree was full of ripe fruits two passers-by, wanting to get some of the mangoes, threw stones at them, some of which fell on the saint and hit him. The king of the place was a great devotee of the saint and used to visit him every day. When he came there in the evening he learned what had befallen the saint and immediately ordered arrest of the miscreants. They were duly arrested and brought before the king. Having ordered severe punishment for them he came to the saint and told him what he had done, thinking that the saint would be pleased. The saint, however, asked the king to release the miscreants at once and said, "This tree when stoned did not grudge to give its fruits to the miscreants. If a tree could behave like this with such people, why should not man, with his superior intelligence and morals, also behave in the same manner? You should, therefore, immediately release the two men, give each of them a hundred mangoes and tell them to behave better in future."

God never gave man a thing to do, concerning which it were irreverent to ponder how the Son of God would have done it. —*G. Macdonald.*

REPORT

Autumn was unusually beautiful in New England this year, so warm with many days of clear sunshine and brilliant in the colors of its foliage. As the golden pine needles freshly carpeted the grounds and fallen leaves made rustling music under foot, the little Ashrama in Cohasset seemed to assume an unearthly lustre. It was with expressed reluctance that the Vedanta Centre's resident Community moved into the city house of Boston in the middle of October.

The time was at hand for the yearly celebration of Durga Puja—the worship of Divine Mother—which required preparation. Three days, October 17th, 18th and 19th, were vibrant at the Centre, all activities being directed to the living Presence in the Shrine—the Mother. Special Services were held in the mornings and evenings, while feasting and fellowship filled the hours with enthusiasm. Thursday evening, fifty persons came as guests to partake of the Hindu banquet glowing with the spirit of the Festival, gladness and peace. Mrs. Gill Consolette entertained the group with folk dances of France, while her talented friend played many classical solos on the piano. Through the interpretation of Gayatri Devi, Divine Mother became vivid and living for the assembled listeners and the ritual of Her advent to earth significant and full of blessing.

One Sunday in October was dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi in memory of his birthday. At the eleven o'clock Service Gayatri Devi spoke on "The Man of Peace" and in the evening on "Is Non-Resistance Practical."

As usual Deepali, or the Illumination Festival, remains the favorite among the autumn celebrations. On the evening of Thursday, November 9th, soft innumerable candles burned everywhere, and predominantly in the Chapel where all the

seats were taken up one by one. The eager group witnessed that vision of beauty which flickering lights impart to a setting of serene loveliness, and listened attentively to the Service explaining the triumph of light over darkness.

On November 19th, Gayatri Devi was invited to speak before the young people's group of Belmont Congregational Church. As the hour of the engagement interfered with the Centre's regular Sunday program, the group consented to come to the Centre to hear Gayatri Devi's lecture on "Hinduism" as a part of the evening Service. Later all gathered together in the reading room beside a lighted fire and asked questions on India and her religious philosophy.

The joy of Thanksgiving was dimmed by the sudden passing of Brother John on Sunday, the 19th. A Memorial Service was held in the morning of the following Tuesday. Many friends came to pay their tribute to this devoted soul who had greatly endeared himself by his natural warmth and kindliness.

In view of the loss and sorrow the Centre had known, the Thanksgiving Service in the morning of November 23rd seemed specially significant. The Altar was laden with many offerings, fruits, flowers and lights, and varieties of multicolored vegetables at its feet. Many of the faithful were present, expressing their thankfulness together with Gayatri Devi who spoke from her heart. Her gratitude overflowed in words for all the gifts the Lord had sent through the year, even for the ordeal of pain which like a fire burns the imperfections of human nature, leaving it purer and more tender.

At the writing of the report, the Christmas Bazaar was in full display with Tea on Saturday afternoons creating a warm spirit of friendliness and fellowship. Plans were all in order for the Sunday Services preceding Christmas, one of which will be the annual Christmas Eve Service.

Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California

In the Fall of every year—the exact date depending on the phases of the moon—comes the great Hindu festival of the Divine Mother, which lasts for three days and is dedicated to the Infinite Mother of all creation from whose mighty hand come life and death, pleasure and pain, success and failure, victory and defeat. In India, at this time of the year, all enemies are forgiven, gifts are exchanged and the spirit of divine love is felt to be abroad. This autumn, at the Ananda Ashrama, California, the festival fell on Tuesday, October 17th. As usual, there were special expressions of devotion at the Services in the Temple and shrine, while friends gathered to receive the blessing which seemed palpable to those who were open to receive it.

On Thursday, Novmber 9th, the Ashrama Temple of the Universal Spirit flickered and glowed with innumerable candles and vigils, which lighted up the flowers on the altar and helped to create an atmosphere of peace and sanctity in sharp contrast to the fury of a wind that raged outside, and prevented external illumination. The occasion was *Deepali* or Festival of Lights, which falling on the dark of the moon, symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness. Many assembled at the special Service held at eight o'clock in the evening, to hear Sister Daya speak on the "Inward Light"—the Light of the Spirit—and to listen to the organ and to the pure voices of the Ashrama singers. So while the gale tore at the Temple with fierce hands, prayers were silently lifted that light might come in full measure to all living things. One could not help recalling a verse from Evelyn Underhill's lovely poem:

"What do you find within, O soul, my brother?
What do you find within?

I find great quiet where no noises come.
Without, the world's din:
Silence in my home."

November 23rd, Thanksgiving Day, again saw the Temple aglow with light and color, reflected from the offering of flowers, fruit and vegetables which embellished the altar like many-colored jewels and lay heaped before it in profusion.

After the morning Service, the proverbial Thanksgiving festivities were observed by the community. The day, warm, with a brilliant sun and an azure sky, gave a longdrawn out benediction.

A BOOK REVIEW

We have recently received from India a book entitled "Vedanta Through Stories" by Swami Sambuddhananda, published in Bombay. It comes as a welcome contribution toward Vedanta publications. The tales are simply told and are classified under titles according to the lesson they impart. They are drawn from India's treasure house of ancient literature, the Upanishads, or the lives of Divine Incarnations and Saints, such as Sri Krishna, Rama, Buddha and others. Some are legends, some are the parables of Sri Ramakrishna, and others are anecdotes woven into stories. Through them all runs the note of homely wisdom and the thread of profound philosophy characteristic of Hindu thought.

In the East and the West, for the old and the young, stories hold irresistible fascination. There can be no doubt that the book will win its place beside all the literature that is now carrying the message of Vedanta throughout the world.

Several of the stories are reprinted in this issue of "The Message of the East."

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